

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7211

INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 2842

BANGKOK FOR AMBASSADOR SAXBE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR IN PK US

SUBJECT: PRESS CRITICISM OF US ARMS SALES TO PAKISTAN

CONTINUED.

BEGIN SUMMARY: DELHI ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS FEB. 28

ACCORDED PROMINENT NEWS PLAY TO THE INDO-SOVIET JOINT

COMMUNIQUE EXPRESSING "GRAVE ANXIETY" AT THE US DECISION;

CONCERN OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OVER THE AMERICAN ARMS

AID TO PINDI; AND AMBASSADOR KAUL'S WASHINGTON TELEVISION

INTERVIEW. PAPERS REPORTED AMBASSADOR SAXBE MAY ARRIVE MARCH 3.

COMMENTATORS CONTINUED TO CRITICIZE THE ARMS EMBARGO DECISION.

END SUMMARY.

1. ALL NEWSPAPERS GAVE TOP BILLING TO THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE

ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF SOVIET DEFENSE MINISTER GRECHKO'S

VISIT TO INDIA. HEADLINES STRESSED NEW DELHI AND MOSCOW CRITICIZE

THE US DECISION. THE INDIAN EXPRESS RAN A TYPICAL HEADLINE;

"INDIA, SOVIET UNION EXPRESS GRAVE ANXIETY AT AMERICAN DECISION."

STORY CONTENTS HIGHLIGHTED THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE EXPRESSED

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THEIR "GRAVE ANXIETY" AT THE ACTION TAKEN BY CERTAIN QUARTERS TO

STEP UP ARMS RACE, ADDING THAT THE OBVIOUS REFERENCE WAS TO THE UNITED STATES.

2. REPORTAGE PROMINENTLY FEATURED COMMENTS OF SEVERAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, ESPECIALLY FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN AND SARVODAYA LEADER JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN, AT A DAY LONG "NATIONAL SEMINAR" ON "THE RISING THREAT OF INTERVENTION IN ASIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIAN SECURITY." NEWS REPORTS COMMENTED THAT ALL PARTIES CAST ASIDE THEIR IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES TO "STRONGLY CONDEMN" THE WASHINGTON DECISION. A TYPICAL HEADLINE: "US STEP CONDEMNED AT ALL-PARTY SEMINAR" (TIMES OF INDIA). COVERAGE UNDERSCORED THE STATEMENT OF CHAVAN THAT THE US DECISION WAS TRAGIC AND REGRETTABLE AND INDIA WILL NOT BE RATTLED BY IT. REPORTS QUOTED NARAYAN SAYING IN HIS MESSAGE THAT THE US IS ATTEMPTING TO MISUSE THE BENEFITS OF DETENTE TO RE-ESTABLISH THE IMPERIALIST HOLD ON RESOURCE RICH REGIONS."

3. REPORTING AMBASSADOR KAUL'S WASHINGTON TELEVISION INTERVIEW, PAPERS LED WITH HIS STATEMENT THAT HE HAD THE FULL APPROVAL OF HIS GOVERNMENT-- A POINT STRESSED IN MANY HEADLINES. THE PRESS TRUST OF INDIA-BASED DISPATCH ALSO QUOTED HIM SAYING "AFTER ALL PARTS OF THEIR (U.S.) STATEMENT ARE UNACCEPTABLE TO MY GOVERNMENT" AND "AS FAR AS THE ASSURANCES" OF DR. KISSINGER ARE CONCERNED, "ONLY TIME WILL SHOW WHETHER THEY ARE CREDIBLE OR NOT."

4. SEVERAL PAPERS FRONTPAGED ON ASSOCIATED PRESS-CREDITED DISPATCH WHICH SAID STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS "ASSUME" THAT AMBASSADOR SAXBE, WHO HAS BEEN IN A "HOLDING PATTERN" IN BANGKOK, WILL ARRIVE NEW DELHI "WITHIN A FEW DAYS--PROBABLY MONDAY."

5. EDITORIAL REACTION WAS GENERALLY CRITICAL. THE NATIONAL HERALD LEAD EDITORIAL ON SOVIET DEFENSE MINISTER GRECHKO'S INDIA VISIT ALLEGED THAT THE US HAS "TRIED TO CREATE TENSION IN THE SUBCONTINENT" BUT THE SOVIET UNION HAS "REITERATED AND DEMONSTRATED ITS FRIENDSHIP" WITH INDIA. CONDEMNING THE US FOR "GOING BACK ON ITS EARLIER ASSURANCES," THE EDITORIAL DECLARED: "DR. KISSINGER'S DEFENSE....IS HARDLY CONVINCING. AMBIGUITY IN DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE IS UNDERSTANDABLE BUT NOT FALSEHOOD. IS IT DIPLOMACY TO SAY 'YES' FOR 'NO' AND 'NO' FOR 'YES'? IN A LENGTHY EDITPAGE COMMENTARY IN THE INDIAN EXPRESS, GEN. UNCLASSIFIED

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J.N. CHAUDHURI (RETIRED) TERMED THE WASHINGTON DECISION "UNHAPPY." HE OBSERVED: "IF AMERICANS CAN MANIFESTLY MAKE IT CLEAR TO INDIA THAT THESE ARMS POSE NO THREAT FOR THE FUTURE AND ARE MINIMAL IN QUANTITY, PERHAPS THERE IS A CHANCE FOR CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT IN INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONSHIP. BUT POLITICAL CLARIFICATIONS REGARDING ARMS ARE NOTORIOUSLY DIFFICULT.... AMERICAN DECISIONS IN THE RECENT PAST HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN EASY TO UNDERSTAND. OBVIOUSLY THEY THINK THEY KNOW BEST.".....

6. CALLING THE DECISION "REGRETTABLE," THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS CAUTIONED NEW DELHI NOT TO GET UNDULY WORKED UP AND LOSE A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE BECAUSE IT IS CLEARLY NOT IN OUR INTERESTS TO ANTAGONIZE THE UNITED STATES ESPECIALLY WHEN IT IS OSTENSIBLY ATTEMPTING TO SWITCH OVER TO MORE MATURE RELATIONSHIP BASED UPON A RECOGNITION OF INDIA'S SPECIAL POSITION IN THE SUB-CONTINENT." IT EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT AFTER THE RUFFLED FEELINGS ON EITHER SIDE HAVE DIED DOWN, MR. CHAVAN AND DR. KISSINGER WILL BE ABLE TO MEET AND CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE THAT WAS BEGUN LAST YEAR." THE MOTHERLAND EDITPAGED PREM BHATIA'S FEATURE "SOVIET HIGH DRAMA-- IN INDIA." COMMENTING ON THE ARMS EMBARGO DECISION, BHATIA DEPLORED THE "BREAST-BEATING" BY INDIA AND ADDED: "MEANWHILE THE DAY OF A REAL RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE US HAS BEEN PUT OFF." HE CONCLUDED: "AMERICANS MAY PERHAPS BE GIVEN THE CREDIT FOR ENLIGHTENING US YET ONCE MORE ABOUT A THING CALLED 'REAL POLITIC.'" IN THAT CONTEXT IT WOULD BE POINTLESS FOR INDIA TO REMAIN PERMANENTLY SULLEN AND FOR MR. CHAVAN TO REFUSE TO FULFILL HIS ENGAGEMENT IN WASHINGTON IN MARCH."

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